

Taras Shevchenko continues to serve as a source of inspiration to Ukrainians almost 200 years after his untimely demise. Born into serfdom, as a child, Shevchenko excelled in painting even though he received no formal training. His talent eventually attracted the attention of the best artists, who bought Shevchenko's freedom. A brilliant artist, Shevchenko turned out to be an even more talented poet, who through his works gave strength and hope to millions of freedom fighters. The intensity of his words have resonated in the hearts of many, igniting the fire of freedom and inspiring a continued struggle for liberation. He led not just by his word, but by personal example as well. Throughout his life, Shevchenko organized and participated in societies promoting the liberation of Ukraine from the Russian Empire, which cost him his freedom on several occasions and ultimately cost him his life. Still his legacy endures and on this day we celebrate Shevchenko's great spirit of love for Ukraine, freedom and equality.

As a longtime supporter of the Ukrainian American community, I welcome the community's efforts to unite and stand strong on the issues that concern it in the United States and Ukraine. More than ever Ukraine needs a strong, unified voice in the United States to highlight Ukraine's achievements and evaluate its current policies. I am glad to see that Ukrainian Americans remain active in political and civic life in the United States and continue to cooperate with the governments of the United States and Ukraine.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 4658,  
SERVICEMEMBERS LEGAL PROTECTION ACT OF 2004

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 23, 2004*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce H.R. 4658, the Servicemembers Legal Protection Act of 2004, legislation to further strengthen the legal and financial rights of military servicemembers, particularly those called up to active duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and other duty stations around the world. This legislation would amend a prior law I sponsored, that President Bush signed last year, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, Public Law 108-189.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I chaired a hearing of the Veterans' Affairs Committee to examine how well the federal statutes protecting our servicemembers rights were being enforced. Testifying before the Committee were several servicemembers and family members with personal experiences in which their rights were not properly protected under existing laws.

One witness, Ms. Tammy Kimmel whose husband served in the Army at Fort Hood in Texas, told the Committee that when her husband was ordered to a new duty location, her landlord refused to release her from their joint housing lease as required by law. The landlord claimed that the law required the servicemember to be released, but not the spouse.

The legislation I am introducing today would help prevent such misinterpretations as well as strengthen and expand several existing legal and financial protections.

Mr. Speaker, with more than 150,000 Guard and reserve members activated in the continuing war on terrorism, we must ensure that the laws protecting their rights are fully and faithfully executed and enforced. Congress approved the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act last year precisely because of perceived ambiguities and weaknesses in longstanding federal statutes covering military personnel called to active duty or redeployed to new duty locations.

Regrettably, despite sixty years of federal case law, culminating with the passage last year of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, there are still some individuals, businesses, and organizations who cynically refuse to provide all the reliefs required by statute.

We will neither tolerate outright violations nor attempts to distort the clear purposes of the laws Congress has enacted. The evidence from today's hearing is overwhelming and the intention of the law is clear. Those men and women who put their lives on hold and on the line must not suffer economic or legal harm that results from their military service. This Committee and this Congress will continue to do all that can be done to protect the legal and financial rights of all of our servicemembers, whether they are active duty, reserve or Guard.

As introduced, H.R. 4658, the Servicemembers Legal Protection Act, would:

Strengthen the lease termination protections for dependants of servicemembers relocating per military orders;

Expand the definition of court and administrative judgments and rulings covered by the law;

Require that waivers of their rights by servicemembers must be duly executed in separate, clearly written documents;

Extend to plaintiffs the same relief granted to defendants in civil court proceedings;

Extend the housing and automobile lease termination relief to servicemembers relocated from states or territories outside the contiguous United States (e.g., Hawaii, Alaska);

Strengthen the leases termination provisions for servicemembers affected by individual deployments;

Prevent double taxation of servicemembers due to differences in state and local excise, use, or other similar taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act that passed last year both restated and expanded the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act first approved in 1940. This federal statute is designed to help ensure that U.S. military personnel are not disadvantaged when they have been called to active duty and are therefore unable to be present at legal proceedings.

Among the most important protections added by the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act last year were automatic 90-day stays for civil and administrative proceedings, protections for servicemembers and their families from housing evictions, the right of servicemembers and their spouses to terminate housing and automobile leases, and protection from repossession of automobiles.

Enactment of the legislation I am introducing today, H.R. 4658, the Servicemembers Legal Protection Act, would provide an additional level of support for all of the brave men and women defending our nation and our freedom around the world. I urge my colleagues to look at this important legislation and lend their support to protecting the legal and financial rights of all of our servicemen and women.

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO THE CITY OF WAUSEON, OHIO ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR SESQUICENTENNIAL

**HON. PAUL E. GILLMOR**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 23, 2004*

Mr. GILLMOR. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to pay tribute to a special in Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. This year, the community of Wauseon, Ohio will celebrate the sesquicentennial of its founding.

Mr. Speaker, the City of Wauseon was officially recorded as a town in 1854 upon the arrival of the New York Central Railroad. The City earns its name from the long heritage of the Maumee Indian tribe. The last council of the Maumee tribe was held with the United States government 16 years before the founding of the City. It was at this council that Chief Wauseon conveyed all Maumee tribe lands in the Northwest Territory to the United States Government.

From its very beginning, Wauseon had a strong connection with the railroad. Its very creation came as a result of the railroad moving to Northwest Ohio. The first settlement in Wauseon came in anticipation of the arrival of the New York Central Railroad. Wauseon contributed to the prosperity of our young nation, the strength of our economy and the birth of our industrial might. Wauseon has a deep understanding and appreciation of their vibrant culture and long history.

Today, we honor the June 26th Heritage Days event in Wauseon, Ohio. This event will mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the City of Wauseon. The festival will include a Civil War encampment, Native American pow-wow, and music and food from the 1850's. Pioneer life will be on display throughout the celebration.

As the county seat of Fulton County and its largest city, Wauseon embraces their long and significant heritage and will continue to share this with visitors and members of their community. Building a community mindful of the past and ready for the future speaks to the wisdom and dedication of Wauseon's citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to the diligent effort and unwavering spirit of the citizens of Wauseon. I am confident that Wauseon's sesquicentennial will serve as an essential reminder to the past and promise of our great land.

COMMENDING THE PASCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 23, 2004*

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Pasco County Sheriff's Office for earning national commendations for its efforts to control crime, make the community safer, and improve the lives of Pasco County residents, many of whom live in my congressional district.